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What is claimed is:

1. A method for preparing a hydroxyalkyl starch, comprising the steps of:

5 providing a starch; and

reacting said starch with a starch hydroxyalkylating agent in the presence of an alcohol and an alkali metal at a temperature effective to produce a granular hydroxyalkylated starch having an MS sufficient to render  
10 said hydroxyalkylated starch cold water soluble.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the MS of said starch is greater than about 0.30 after hydroxyalkylation.

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3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.30 to about 0.70 after hydroxyalkylation.

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4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.4 to 0.50 after hydroxyalkylation.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein said  
25 temperature ranges from about 90° C to about 110° C.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the reaction of starch with the hydroxyalkylating agent occurs for a time period ranging from about 1.5 hours to about 2  
30 hours.

7. A method according to claims 1-3, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is propylene oxide or ethylene oxide.

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8. A method according to claim 7, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is ethylene oxide.

9. The starch prepared in accordance with claim 1.

10. A method for preparing a crosslinked hydroxyalkyl starch, comprising the steps of:

providing a starch;

reacting said starch with a starch hydroxyalkylating agent in the presence of an alcohol and an alkali metal at a temperature effective to produce a granular hydroxyalkylated starch having an MS sufficient to render said hydroxyalkylated starch cold water soluble; and

crosslinking said starch with a poly-functional crosslinking agent.

11. A method according to claim 10, wherein said poly-functional crosslinking agent is selected from among phosphorus oxychloride and epichlorohydrin.

12. A method according to claim 10, wherein the MS of said starch is greater than about 0.30 after hydroxyalkylation.

13. A method according to claim 10, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.30 to about 0.70 after hydroxyalkylation.

14. A method according to claim 10, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.4 to 0.50 after hydroxyalkylation.

15. A method according to claim 10, wherein said temperature ranges from about 90° C to about 110° C.

16. A method according to claim 10, wherein the reaction of starch with the hydroxyalkylating agent occurs for a time period ranging from about 1.5 hours to about 2 hours.

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17. A method according to claim 10, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is propylene oxide or ethylene oxide.

10 18. A method according to claim 10, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is ethylene oxide.

( ) 19. The starch prepared in accordance with claim 10.

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20. A method for preparing a crosslinked hydroxyalkyl starch, comprising the steps of:

providing a starch; and

20 reacting said starch with a starch hydroxyalkylating agent in the presence of an alcohol and an alkali metal and a poly-functional crosslinking agent at a temperature effective to produce a granular, crosslinked hydroxyalkylated starch having an MS sufficient to render said hydroxyalkylated starch cold water soluble.

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21. A method according to claim 20, wherein said poly-functional crosslinking agent is selected from among phosphorus oxychloride and epichlorohydrin.

30 22. A method according to claim 20, wherein the MS of said starch is greater than about 0.30 after hydroxyalkylation.

35 23. A method according to claim 20, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.30 to about 0.70 after hydroxyalkylation.

24. A method according to claim 20, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.4 to 0.50 after hydroxyalkylation.

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25. A method according to claim 20, wherein said temperature ranges from about 90° C to about 110° C.

26. A method according to claim 20, wherein the reaction of starch with the hydroxyalkylating agent occurs for a time period ranging from about 1.5 hours to about 2 hours.

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27. A method according to claim 20, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is propylene oxide or ethylene oxide.

28. A method according to claim 27, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is ethylene oxide.

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29. The starch prepared in accordance with claim 20.

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30. A method for preparing a crosslinked hydroxyalkyl starch, comprising the steps of:

providing a starch; and

5 reacting said starch in an aqueous slurry with a starch hydroxyalkylating agent in the presence of an alcohol and an alkali metal at a temperature effective to produce a granular hydroxyalkylated starch having a molar substitution (MS) sufficient to render said hydroxyalkylated starch cold water soluble; and  
10 crosslinking said starch with a poly-functional crosslinking agent.

31. A method for preparing a crosslinked hydroxyalkyl starch, comprising the steps of:

providing a starch; and

15 reacting said starch in an aqueous slurry with a starch hydroxyalkylating agent in the presence of an alcohol and an alkali metal and a poly-functional crosslinking agent at a temperature effective to produce a granular, crosslinked hydroxyalkylated starch having a  
20 molar substitution (MS) sufficient to render said hydroxyalkylated starch cold water soluble.

32. A method according to claim 30, wherein said poly-functional crosslinking agent is selected from among phosphorus oxychloride and epichlorohydrin.

33. A method according to claim 30, wherein the MS of said starch is greater than about 0.30 after hydroxyalkylation.

34. A method according to claim 30, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.30 to about 0.70 after hydroxyalkylation.

35. A method according to claim 30, wherein the MS of said starch ranges from about 0.4 to 0.50 after hydroxyalkylation.

36. A method according to claim 30, wherein said temperature ranges from about 90° to about 110°C.

37. A method according to claim 30, wherein the reaction of starch with the hydroxyalkylating agent occurs for a time period ranging from about 1.5 hours to about 2 hours.

38. A method according to claim 30, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is propylene oxide or ethylene oxide.

39. A method according to claim 30, wherein said hydroxyalkylating agent is ethylene oxide.

40. A method according to claim 31, wherein said poly-functional crosslinking agent is selected from among phosphorus oxychloride and epichlorohydrin.

41. A method according to claim 31, wherein the MS of said starch is greater than about 0.30 after hydroxyalkylation.

42. A method according to claim 31, wherein the MS  
of said starch ranges from about 0.30 to about 0.70 after  
hydroxyalkylation.

43. A method according to claim 31, wherein the MS  
5 of said starch ranges from about 0.4 to 0.50 after  
hydroxyalkylation.

44. A method according to claim 31, wherein said  
temperature ranges from about 90°C to about 110°C.

45. A method according to claim 31, wherein the  
10 reaction of starch with the hydroxyalkylating agent  
occurs for a time period ranging from about 1.5 hours to  
about 2 hours.

46. A method according to claim 31, wherein said  
hydroxyalkylating agent is propylene oxide or ethylene  
15 oxide.

47. A method according to claim 31, wherein said  
hydroxyalkylating agent is ethylene oxide.